

THE HOUSE PHYSICIAN'S HANDBOOK. By C. Allan Birch, M.D.,
F.R.C.P. (Pp. vii + 160; figs. 5. 10s. 6d.) Edinburgh and London : E. & S.
Livingstone, 1955.

This small book has been written by Dr. Birch to provide, in small compass, information and guidance on many of the difficulties and problems which house physicians meet in their day-to-day work. It is particularly valuable for those working in non-teaching hospitals who do not always have the immediate guidance of a more experienced colleague.

The book consists of several sections. In the first the house physician's duties are described and useful information regarding death certificates, notification of the coroner, medico-legal notes, infectious diseases in general wards, etc., are given. Sections 2 and 3 deal with clinical procedures and clinical pathology, and provide general information which covers most aspects of the day-to-day work in a medical ward. Section 4 is a long one on medical treatment and covers most of the commonly used drugs. Methods of treating urgent conditions such as acute ventricular failure, asthma, hæmatemesis, etc., will be found useful for the inexperienced doctor confronted with a seriously ill patient requiring immediate attention. A helpful section on fluid and electrolyte therapy will give confidence in the handling of this important aspect of modern treatment. Diabetic ketosis and poisoning are two other subjects covered in this section.

It is obviously impossible in a book of 160 pages to cover everything, but Dr. Birch has been amazingly successful in providing information on the majority of problems likely to vex the newly qualified house physician. In all, he has provided a most readable and helpful book, and those who possess it will find it a reliable guide for their work in the ward. D. A. D. M.

CLINICAL PATHOLOGY IN GENERAL PRACTICE. Specially Commissioned
Articles for the British Medical Journal (October, 1953, to July, 1954).
(Pp. x + 321; illustrated. 21s.) London : British Medical Association, 1955.

MANY practitioners are insufficiently aware of the facilities which to-day enable them to have laboratory examinations carried out. If these examinations are to be of value and, if the time of laboratory workers is to be employed to best advantage, it is essential that the practitioner should know the value and limitations of modern clinical pathology. The thirty-nine articles, contributed by an equal number of well-known workers, indicate the place of laboratory investigation in medical practice. Some articles, such as that on post-mortem technique, probably attempt too much. Many laboratory workers will not agree with some viewpoints expressed, but all should welcome the book. It is somewhat alarming to the pathologist to be told that "while a biopsy report must be truthful, it should also be tactful, so that an intelligent patient would not be unduly alarmed." Surely other, and more suitable, bedside reading might be provided.

In general, these articles describe the techniques necessary for obtaining specimens, review the assessment of renal and alimentary function and of metabolic and endocrine disorders and discuss the diagnosis of infections and the recognition of blood disorders. No space is wasted describing how tests are done, but the practitioner, whether in consultant or general practice, will benefit by the clear and positive guidance in almost all articles. J. E. M.

HORMONES IN REPRODUCTION. Edited by A. S. Parkes. Vol. 11, No. 2
of British Medical Bulletin. (Pp. 83-170; plates 5. 15s.) London : British
Council, 1955.

It was originally intended to cover the entire subject, but this was too large a project and each author was invited to contribute an article on a subject known to be of special interest to him. As the editor remarks, this has led to some oddities of sub-division and slight overlapping and omission. Admittedly all the papers are of a high level of authority, but the volume may disappoint the practitioner of human medicine. One of the difficulties of endocrinology is the variation between different animal species, and the papers illustrate how little of the immense work in this field can be applied to man. J. E. M.